REFLECTIONS

UPON

Mr. *BAXTER*'s Laſt BOOK,

ENTITULED,

The Engliſh Non-conformity,

AS UNDER

King *CHARLES* II. and King *JAMES* II.

Truly Stated and Argued.

In a Letter to a Friend.

I labour for Peace, but when I ſpeak unto them thereof: they make them ready to Battle, Pſal. 120. 6. Old Tranſlation.

LONDON:

Printed for *Robert Clavil*, at the *Peacock* in *St. Pauls Church-Yard*. 1689.

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In a Letter to a Friend.

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REFLECTIONS
UPON
Mr. Baxter's
Laſt BOOK.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

SIR,

WHen you ſent me Mr. *Baxter's* New Book into the Country, you deſired my thoughts concerning it in a Letter. I hope you did not mean that I ſhould write you an Anſwer to it; if you did, I muſt tell you, that you did not look into the Book, nor read the *Title-Page* it ſelf, if you expected ſuch a perſormance from me; alas, Sir, Mr. *Baxter's* Books are not ſo eaſily anſwered. He tells you himſelf that his Books are *of Unconfutable Defence*, that they cannot be anſwered, and would you have me to offer to anſwer Mr. *Baxter's* Book, when he himſelf aſſures us before-hand that *his Books cannot be Anſwered:* No Sir, I am too wiſe to attempt it, eſpecially ſince

ſuch Men as the *Dean* of St. *Pauls* and Dr. *Sherlock* have ventured to ſo little purpoſe to meddle with Mr. *Baxter*'s Books, while they were of *Unconfutable Defence* and Unanſwerable. And now I have mentioned the *Dean* of St. *Pauls*, I cannot do leſs than pitty ſome late great miſtakes of his with all my heart; tho the World allow Him to be as well qualified by his extraordinary Learning as any Perſon to defend the Church of *England* againſt the Adverſaries on both ſides, and think him to have ſo much skill as to diſtinguiſh betwixt Books that *might* be Anſwered, and Books *that could not*; yet He has of late Years had the great unhappineſs to encounter with Adverſaries, that wrote nothing but *Demonſtration* and *Unconfutable Books*, and to foyl himſelf with venturing out againſt ſuch Writers. I believe the *Dean* will not haſtily forget his Popiſh Adverſary Mr. *John Sergeant*, who run him down at ſuch a ſtrange rate with *firſt Principles*, and one *Demonſtration* upon the back of another, and baffled him juſt at the rate Mr. *Baxter* did: all which might have been ſaved, had Mr. *Dean* been but as cautious as I am, had He but taken theſe two Invincible Mens words, as I do. I would no more venture upon Mr. *Baxter* with his *Unconfutable Books*, than upon Mr. *Sergeant*, that up and down his *Letter to the Continuator of the preſent State of the Controverſie*, tells the Reader, that his Books *cannot be diſprov'd*, that it is an *impoſſible task* to anſwer them. *I am told* (ſays Mr. *Baxter*) *by divers, that I have written enough already on theſe Subjects, were it only my firſt and ſecond Plea*, &c. *The beſt Witts of our Nation* (ſays Mr. *Sergeant* in the ſame Letter) *Men not a jot inferiour to your great Doctor himſelf* [Dr. *Stillingfleet*] *have not only read thoſe Letters of mine* [his

In the Preface.

five

five *Catholick* Letters as he calls them againſt Doctor *Stillingfleet.*] *but given ſuch a Character of them for* **Unanſwerable** *as is not Modeſt for me to repeat.* Now I am ſatisfied to let two ſuch men alone, and dare no more Anſwer Mr. *Baxter* than Mr. *Sergeant*, eſpecially when I find what pittiful Work they made of it, that were ſo hardy to write againſt either of theſe two *Invinſible* Champions. Mr. *Baxter* ſpeaking of ſome of his Writings againſt the *Church of England*, ſays, *I know not of any one of theſe that are Anſwered, or any thing like an Anſwer to them Written, ſave that to ſome part of the firſt* (to wit his Plea for Peace) *ſome* **meer Impertinent Noiſe** *was made by* **ſome one** *that is confuted.* This is very great and lofty indeed, and yet his invincible Brother-Champion *John Sergeant* can talk full as bigg; eſpecially when the *Dean* of St. *Pauls*, or the *Dean* of *Canterbury* (*a*) come in his way. Page 3.

(a) *See Letter to the Continuator.*

And yet as loftily as theſe two Champions Mr. *Sergeant* and Mr. *Baxter* talk of their own performances, and of their great Victories over the *Dean* of St. *Pauls*, I dare appeal to Mr. *Baxter*'s Conſcience, that he does believe that the *Dean* hath fully confuted all *John Sergeant*'s *Pleas* for *Oral Tradition*, and to Mr. *Sergeant*'s Conſcience, that the *Dean* had done as much for Mr. *Baxter*'s *Pleas* for *Nonconformity*.

This Sir, I hope will ſatisfie you that you ought to expect no anſwer to Mr. *Baxter*'s Book from me, but if it will not alone, I have a Reaſon or two more for you, one is, That all that Mr. *Baxter* hath offered in this Book of Argument, hath been Anſwered over and over again by his Anſwerers, the *Dean* of *Pauls* and Dr. *Sherlock*; and tho' he be not aſhamed to tranſcribe himſelf, and to teaze the World with the

ſame Reaſons over again, yet others are to imitate him in tranſcribing their Anſwers to him. Another Reaſon is, becauſe the World have given up Mr. *Baxter* as well as his Brother *John Sergeant* as incurable, upon whom good Advice as well as good Arguments are equally loſt. I look upon theſe two to be the very Reverſe of one another, that Mr. *Sergeant* is the *Popiſh* Mr. *Baxter*, and Mr. *Baxter* the *Proteſtant John Sergeant*, they are in every thing ſo exactly the ſame; their cauſe is the ſame, Mr. *Sergeant*'s buſtle for *Oral Tradition* being every jot as good as Mr. *Baxter*'s for Non-Conformity; their management is the ſame, the one writes as voluminouſly as the other, the one hath the ſame Art of doing it that the other by Tranſcribing his own ſelf, and by infinite Tautology and ſplitting of Diviſions; the one Writes as dogmatically as the other. In a word, They write Demonſtration alike, they talk ſenſe alike, and they have had of late, I believe I may ſay ſucceſs alike in making the World weary of reading their Writings.

Another Reaſon I have for not Anſwering Mr. *Baxter*'s Book, becauſe I am affraid he is ſo fond of himſelf, and ſo reſolute for his own Opinions, that he will not vouchſafe to read his Adverſaries Books, and I have not ſo much time upon my hands as to throw it away upon an Anſwer to Mr. *Baxter*, which will be thrown aſide by him without once reading it. I have reaſon to believe that this is become of late his temper; ſince in this very Book of his you ſent me, he ſays, nothing had been Anſwered to a certain Book of his, whereas his meaning ſhould be, that he had not, or would not read the Anſwer to it. Speaking (Page 2*d.* and 3*d.*) of his *Plea for Peace*, and his *full* **Treatiſe of Epiſcopacy**, and his *Apology*, and his

Second

Second Plea for Peace, and *Treatiſe of Church Concord*, He very gravely adds, *I know not of any one of theſe that are Anſwered, or any thing like an Anſwer to them Written, ſave that to ſome part of the firſt* [to wit the *Plea for Peace*] **Some meer impertinent Noiſe was made by ſome one that is Anſwered:** and yet you and I have read, and I dare ſay Mr. *Baxter* himſelf has ſeen a Book Printed ſeven Years ago with this Title, *A Vindication of the Primitive Church and Dioceſan Epiſcopacy, in Anſwer to Mr.* Baxter's *Church-Hiſtory of Biſhops and their Councils abridged:* **As alſo to ſome part of his Treatiſe of Epiſcopacy.** If you remember that Book, but eſpecially the *Preface* to it, you are able to give another Reaſon beſide forgetfulneſs, why Mr. *Baxter* takes no notice of that *Anſwer* to *Part* of his **Treatiſe of Epiſcopacy**, perchance never was Man's Picture better taken than Mr. *Baxter's* is in the Preface to that Book; whoever would know Mr. *Baxter*, and take his height, need only read that Preface and Book, and I am confident that would Mr. *Baxter* himſelf but read the Preface it ſelf twice over with calmneſs and deliberation, he would never ſet Pen to Paper more in Controverſie. You have now, Sir, the reſt of my Reaſons why you ſhould not expect, nor I write an Anſwer to this Book, however I will not return you the Book without making ſome few Reflections upon it, much fewer than it does deſerve.

Printed for Moſes Pitt, 1682.

As I read the Book over, I could not but very much pity the Author of it, He complains in his Title-Page, That Rulers and Clergy want *Willingneſs and Patience to read and hear their juſt defence*; I do aſſure Mr. *Baxter* that I had *Willingneſs and Patience* to read his Book through, and I can aſſure him with-

all,

all, that tho' I was neceſſitated (as you very well know) to read a great many untoward Books in the late Controverſie againſt Popery, yet that the reading of his Book was a greater exerciſe of my patience than even the *Replyes* and the *Defences* of the *Repreſenter*, and Mr. *Sergeant* himſelf: All which was becauſe I found Mr. *Baxter*'s Book to be liable to theſe following Reflections.

That it was one of the moſt unneceſſary, unſeaſonable, and unaccountable Books, that hath been Publiſhed to my knowledge in this Age.

Every one of theſe Reflections may be eaſily juſtified, and it may be done in the compaſs of a Letter. That this new Book of Mr. *Baxter* was **Unneceſſary**, every one will grant that hath acquainted himſelf with Mr. *Baxter*'s former Books, becauſe he can find nothing here but the bare repetition of his old Arguments and Reaſons for Non-Conformity; it is too ſevere an impoſition upon the World in Mr. *Baxter*, to put them upon buying this his *New Book*, which hath nothing new in it, upon reading this as new, which they that are acquainted in his works have read in them ſo often before. I will go no further back than the Books he hath written within theſe laſt ten Years, and I need inſtance hardly in any elſe than his *Pleas for Peace*; would it be worth the trouble to tranſcribe the harmony that is betwixt *thoſe Books*, and *this* which Mr. *Baxter* hath now Publiſhed, or indeed were any of it worth the reading when done, I could ſhew how very unneceſſary this new Book of Mr. *Baxter*'s was. But in defence of him it will be urged perhaps, That tho indeed the Matter of this New Book be the very ſame with his firſt *Plea for Peace*, for example, yet that the Arguments are improved,

and

and that *more Reaſons* for *Non-Conformity* are urged in *this Book* than in *that*, which had but *Thirty Reaſons* for the *Non-Conformity* of *Miniſters*, and *Six* for *Laymens*, whereas this *New Book* hath *Forty* for *Miniſters*, and *Twelve Reaſons* for *Laymens* Non-Conformity. This is all the defence that can be made for him, and this is a very pleaſant one, a Man would ſuſpect from this that our *Church* hath ſince the Year 1680. been adding new terms of Communion, and that Mr. *Baxter* hath found *Ten* unreaſonable ones among thoſe impoſed upon *Miniſters*, which they cannot with a good Conſcience conform to, and *Six* among thoſe impoſed upon the *Laity*: but ſince there hath been no manner of alteration in the Terms of our Church Communion ſince the Year 1680, ſaving that there is *one acknowledged Reaſon* for Non-Conformity *leſs* by the *Declaration againſt the Obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant*, *being* not required after *March* 1682. How comes it to paſs that there were but *Thirty Reaſons* for the *Miniſters* and *Six* for the *Laymens* Non-Conformity in 1680, and yet that 1683, [for in that year Mr. *Baxter* wrote this Book, tho' he did not Publiſh it till this Year 1689.] the *Miniſters* were grown up to *Forty*, and the *Laymens* to *Twelve*? I can for my part ſee no other reaſon for it, but that Mr. *Baxter* was pleaſed to have it ſo, who may by this art and humour gratifie the World if he pleaſes two Years hence with another new **Engliſh Non-Conformity**, *as under* KING WILLIAM *and* QUEEN MARY *truly ſtated and argued by Richard Baxter*, without any other trouble than only varying the phraſe of this Book a little, and ſplitting his *Forty Miniſters* Reaſons for Non-Conformity into *Eighty*, or a *Hundred*, and his *Laymens Twelve* into

Twenty-four, or what other Number can pleaſe him better. As for the Arguments being improved in this *New Book* further than they were in his *former*, they are indeed improved in one reſpect, they are embelliſht with a great deal more of gaul and indecent paſſion and irreverence towards all ſorts of Perſons, and towards the moſt Sacred of things in the Church, I mean one of the Sacraments, than his *Plea for Peace* was; and this *Plea* was none of the modeſteſt or mildeſt Books, as any one muſt own that will either look into the Book it ſelf, or read the *Dean* of *Pauls* Character of it in his *Preface to the Unreaſonableneſs of Separation*; *under the name* (ſays he) *of* A Plea for Peace, *out comes a Book, which far better deſerved the Title of* A Plea for Diſorder and Separation, *not without frequent, ſharp and bitter Reflections on the Conſtitution of our Church and the Conformity required; as though it had been deſign'd on purpoſe to repreſent the Clergy of our Church, as a company of notorious Lying and Perjured Villains, for conforming to the Laws of the Land, and Orders eſtabliſhed among us*; whoever will be at the pains to compare that *Plea for Peace* and this *New Book* of Mr. *Baxter's* together, will ſee reaſons enough to juſtifie Mr. *Dean's* Character of *that Book*, and *mine* of *this*, that they differ in nothing elſe, but that the new one hath more frequent, more ſharp and bitter Reflections than the other; as if the older Mr. *Baxter* grew, his Paſſion and Severity were the greater, and the nearer he was to his Grave, he did with the greater earneſtneſs wreak his ſpite and anger at our Church, reſolving to leave (as I am afraid the *Dean* ſaid too prophetically of him) *his Life and Sting together in her wounds.*

But

But now we are talking of the number of the Reasons for Non-Conformity, it were almost worth the while to give you a list of Mr. *Baxter*'s in this *New Book*, some of which are very extraordinary, as *his 34th.* for instance, about *renouncing all Obligation from the Covenant to endeavour any alteration of Church-Government*, which it seems is a Reason for Non-Conformity in 1689, tho' that *Declaration* ceased by *Act of Parliament* in *March*, 1682. But since that would be tedious, I will entertain you with the management of *two* of his *Ministers* reasons, and *one* of his *Laymens* for Separation.

His *Sixth Point* of Non-Conformity is the *Article of Baptized Infants Salvation*: This is grounded upon that little Rubrick at the end of the Office for Publick Baptism, *It is certain by Gods Word, that Children which are Baptized, dying before they commit actual Sin are undoubtedly saved*: and this little *Rubrick* he makes most Tragical work about, Mr. *Baxter* will have it to be *a New Article of Faith*, will have the *Assertion* to be *arrogant and divisive*, that it is *false*, and that it is a *dangerous adding to the Word of God*. *We dare not* (says Mr. *Baxter*, when he is grown hot in the Argument) *father that on God which he never spake, and we dread the Curse*, Rev. 22. *against them that shall add to his Word*, viz. *That he will add* His Curses *upon them.*——*This is to* belie God, *and to* take His Name in vain. *And for Nine Thousand or Ten Thousand Ministers to affirm, That this* is certain by God's Word that they are undoubtedly saved, *and when they have done cannot to this day shew us one Word of God that saith it, is such an adding to his Word, as we had rather still be called all that's naught, and Imprison'd, than be guilty of*, and

juſt after, he is ſo fierce that he delares, that if all the other hard terms of Communion were taken off, that tho' the other Thirty-Nine *Miniſters Reaſons* were removed, and this little *Rubrick* left alone, he would not conform. *Should we lye* (ſaith Mr. *Baxter*) *to be conformable, were there* **but this one thing it obligeth us to Non-Conformity whatever we ſuffer for it.**

Here's a taſt for you of Mr. *Baxter's* Spirit, and the management of his cauſe in this *New Book*, you ſee he does not his buſineſs by halves, tho' I muſt needs ſay he might have ſpared himſelf the trouble of the reſt of his Book beſides this Chapter, ſince I think he has done the Church's and the whole Clergy's buſineſs effectually in it, he has proved not only the whole Body of the Clergy of this Church at preſent, but all that have Conformed ſince 1662, to be a parcel of **Curſed Liars** and **Forſworn**, and that the Church doth make that a term of her Communion, which Men cannot aſſent too without **belying God**, and **taking His Name in vain**, and drawing *down his Curſes upon them.* And this I will bear Mr. *Baxter* witneſs if it were well proved, were enough to defend him and all his Brethren Non-Conformiſts. When you read this, I know you will be apt to ſay the Man raves, and ſhould be put into a dark room, and kept from Pen, Ink and Paper, and I cannot but think that too many more will be of your mind, when they ſee what very little occaſion for all this bitter language Mr. *Baxter* had: There is nothing more requiſite herein, than to have theſe two points ſtated. 1. Whether Infants are capable Subjects of Baptiſm, and 2*ly*. By whoſe right it is that they are capable. That Infants are capable Subjects of Baptiſm Mr. *Baxter*

ter does not deny, nor ought, ſince he knows that it was the Practiſe of the Chriſtian Church to Baptize Infants from the very beginning of it, and that we read in the *New-Teſtament* it ſelf of *whole Families* being Baptized, and therefore it was a pittiful ſhift in Mr. *Baxter*, and ſuch as he was driven to meerly by the badneſs of his Cauſe to ſay, (x) *The moſt antient Churches were ſo much imployed in Baptizing the adult converted from Infidelity, that we read little or nothing expreſly, and particularly what they did about Infants in Baptiſm.*

(x) Pag. 50.

But the Second thing is of more conſequence, *by whoſe Right it is, that Infants are capable of Baptiſm*, Mr. *Baxter* indeed will have it by the Parents Right, that their being the Seed of Believers, entitles them to the priviledg of entring into Covenant with God by Baptiſm, but he has been told, and it has been proved often enough to him, that if *Miniſters* muſt Baptize none but the Children of ſuch Parents as are Believers, or have true Faith, they muſt Baptize none at all, ſince they cannot tell what Parents have true Faith, and what have not; and ſince they are not able to diſtinguiſh the Hypocrite from the true Believer, and God only, and not they, does know the Hearts of Men. This Opinion of Mr. *Baxter*, as it makes Infant Baptiſm impracticable, ſo was never own'd by the Primitive Church, which makes Infants Right to Baptiſm to be not upon account either of their Parents Faith, or their own, but upon the Churches Power: The Church of God received the Power of the Keys from God, the chief Exerciſe of which Power of the Keys, is by admitting capable Subjects to remiſſion of Sins by Baptiſm; the Church hath always admitted all Ages to the benefit of Baptiſm, the adult upon their

own Profession of Faith, and entring into Covenant with God, Infants upon the Sponsors entring into Covenant for them, and undertaking for their performance of the Conditions of it when they arrived to years of discretion. And if Mr. *Baxter* would but read that Epistle of his own admired St. *Austin*, which the *Dean* of *Pauls* directed him to, he would let fall his unreasonable, I had almost said his uncharitable Controversie against the poor Children of Wicked or Prophane, or even Atheistical or Heathen Parents who are Gods Creatures, as well as the Children of Mr. *Baxter's* Faithful, who are capable of Salvation as well as the other, and who have been by the Church of God (more Charitable than Mr. *Baxter* herein) admitted, as well as the other to the means of Salvation upon Sponsors engaging for them.

Epistola ad Bonifacium.

Since then Infants are capable of Baptism, and the Christian Church by virtue of the Keys, hath Power to admit all Infants to Remission of Sins by Baptism, and hath from the beginning of the Church admitted Infants to this Privilege, upon their Sponsors engagements for them, it is now time to answer Mr. *Baxters* question, with which he makes so much noise, *where it is said either expresly, or by consequence in Scripture*, that *Infants Baptized, dying before they commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved:* Mr. *Baxter* tells us, That *All that ever by Talk he could hear was, Gal.* 3. 26, 27. *Mark* 16. 16. and *John* 3. 35. and these Texts he triumphs over as not to the purpose; it is not worth while to enter the lists with him in defence of them, but instead of it, I will tell him where he might have read, and I fancy he has read two other Texts together, which I think are enough to satisfie any one but him that shuts his eyes.

Dr.

Dr. *Comber* in his excellent Explications upon the Office of Baptism (*b*) hath put them into an Argument, which for Mr. *Baxter's* sake I will transcribe here. *And that it may not be neglected, we are taught, That* it is certain by Gods Word that Children Baptized, dying before they commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved: *For it is certain by Gods Word, that Baptism is appointed for Remission of Sins*, Acts 2. 38, and 22. 16. *And it is also certain, that all they whose Sins are forgiven are undoubtedly saved*, Psal. 32. 1. *But Infants have no other Sin but their Original corruption, which being remitted in Baptism, they are undoubtedly saved*: And the Learned Doctor adds, That *it is plain, the first Christians believed the same Doctrine*, and *that the Fathers of the Second Council of* Carthage *did anathematise* **those that say, Children are not by Baptism delivered from Hell-fire, and made Partakers of Eternal Life.**

(*b*) Page 179.

Now that we have produced *our Word of God out of two Texts*, which Mr. *Baxter* cannot say are either obscure or ambigious, and that it was so easy to shew the certainty of Baptized Infants Salvation from Scripture, and that this was the Doctrine of the first Christians about them, it were easie for me to turn the Tables upon Mr. *Baxter*, and to make such reflecting abusive Questions, as he has done to the *Youths from the Universities*, to the *raw ignorant Fellows or Lads* as he calls the Clergy, and to treat him at the same rude scornful contemptuous rate, that he hath treated the whole body of our Clergy, upon far better Reasons than he had, but it raises too great an indignation to read such scurrility to be guilty of it, and I thank God, I have not so Learned Christ Jesus.

Dr. Mr.

Mr. *Baxter*'s Ninth Reaſon for Non-Conformity is the *Croſs in Baptiſm*, which he will needs have to be made a *Sacrament* by our Church. In his *Plea for Peace* he had taken ſome pains to prove it a Sacrament (c) and the *Dean of Pauls* in his *Unreaſonableneſs of Separation* took ſome to Convince him of the contrary. Mr. *Baxter* finds in it every one of the parts of a true Sacrament, and the *Dean* ſhewed that he was groſly miſtaken in every one of them. As for the *outward Sign* of this *Baxterian* (for I know no other name to diſtinguiſh it by) *Sacrament*, which he made to be *the tranſient Image of the Croſs uſed in Gods Service*, Mr. *Dean* ſhewed him that this outward viſible Sign was no part of Divine Worſhip, nor uſed as ſuch in Gods Service, either as inſtituted by God or Man for that end; and as to Mr. *Baxter*'s *ſecond uſe* of it, that the Signing with the Croſs is uſed *in our Baptiſmal Covenanting with God*, the *Dean* ſhewed him that it was not, the Baptiſm being compleated before it, and without it the Covenanting Queſtions and Anſwers being over, and the Act of Baptizing, which ſeals and finiſhes the Baptiſmal Covenant being ended before the Sign of the Croſs is uſed in the *Office of Baptiſm*. In Mr. *Baxter's New Book* he has got a ſolution to the *Dean*'s Anſwer, to *his being told that Baptiſm is perfect without it*, his anſwer is, *So it is without the Lord's-Supper, and yet that is juſtly added*, which is a notable anſwer, but has not one grain of weight in it, for how is the Lord's-Supper added to Baptiſm, as a part of Baptiſm, or is not Baptiſm compleat without it, or is it uſed in our *Baptiſmal Covenanting*. Let but Mr. *Baxter* look at *theſe Queſtions* and *his Anſwer*, and he will be aſhamed of it, and he himſelf almoſt thinks it as weak as we can, for he next backs it with

(c) *Mr. Baxter's Plea for Peace*, p. 177, 178, &c.

with a wise saying, *It saith not that Man's Covenanting with God is perfect without it*; if Mr. *Baxter* means here the *Baptismal Covenanting with God*, The *Dean* prov'd it him, that the Baptismal Covenant was perfected and over before the Cross is used; if he speaks of any *other Covenant with God* by the *Sign of the Cross*; the *Dean* shew'd him, that there is no Covenant at all made with God by the Sign of the Cross used in our Baptismal Office.

But to return to Mr. *Baxters* Plea for Peace, he finds another Note of the Sacrament in the Cross, *viz. The thing signified by the receiving of it, that we do as Covenanters, profess and oblige our selves not to be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ Crucified and Manfully*, &c. Here the *Dean* shewed him that the Nature of a Sacrament, is not only to *signifie*, but to *convey* the *Grace* signified by the *Outward Sign*; and that no grace nor benefit was pretended to be conveyed to the Child signed with the Cross, which was a naked Ceremony. Next Mr. *Baxter* says, That *the Minister speaks as Gods Officer from Him* [when he Signs the Person Baptized] *and doth as Christ's Minister, dedicate him by this Sign to the Service of Him who died upon the Cross.* In answer to all which Mr. *Dean* shew'd him first, that the Minister doth not speak as God's Officer from him here, but that he speaks in the name of the Church, which is plain enough from the words used, *WE receive into the Congregation of Christ*, &c. and that the Signing with the Cross, was a token not *to God* but *to Men*, that the Person who had received that Sign upon his Forehead, had engaged himself to the Congregation (into which he was now admitting) that he would live as became the Disciple of a Crucified Redeemer: So that here was no dedicating of the

Person

Perſon ſigned to God, as Mr. *Baxter* falſely underſtands the Practice and Deſign of the Church, but a Sign betwixt Man and Man; or a Significant Ceremony to declare to Men, that he that wears this Badge, is under ſuch or ſuch an Obligation to that Church to which he belongs; and this the *Dean* prov'd to him, was no more, than if after Baptiſm in an Independent Congregation, the Perſon to be admitted a Member of their Church, ſhould be obliged to hold up his hand in token of his owning their Church Covenant, and obliging himſelf to live as a Church Member ought to do.

I have been ſo very particular in giving this account of Mr. *Baxters* Arguments againſt our uſe of the *Sign of the Croſs*, out of his *Plea for Peace*, and a *Breviate* of the *Dean* of St. *Pauls* direct and full anſwers to them, becauſe Mr. *Baxter* was not aſhamed, notwithſtanding ſuch Anſwers as would have ſatisfied all rational Men, to tranſcribe that *whole Chapter* about the *Croſs into* this *New Book*, juſt as it was there without offering to give one word of Reply [except that ſcrap of an Anſwer about Baptiſm being *perfect without the Sign of the Croſs*] to Mr. *Dean's Anſwers* to his *Plea for Peace*. But here I muſt recollect my ſelf, that it was not worth Mr. *Baxters* while to trouble himſelf with giving Anſwers to the *Dean* in *this New Book*, he tells us in his third Page, that to ſome part of his *Plea for Peace indeed*. **Some meer Impertinent Noiſe** was made by **ſome one that is confuted**; which betwixt you and I, is a very pretty Character of the Writings of ſuch *Perſons* as the *Dean* of *Pauls* and Dr. *Sherlock*; whom the *Papiſts* have not found to be ſuch ignorant, or **impertinent** Men, Mr. *Baxter* did, but this is the temper of Mr. *Baxter*, and it is as impoſſible to cure him

him of his Vanity, as of his Paſſion and Virulency.

Before I leave this Article, I would deſire you to compare Mr. *Baxter's Plea for Peace* from Pag. 177. to p. 181. with the 11*th.* Chapter of this his new Book; you will ſee reaſon why I ſay this Book was unneceſſary, ſince the things in both are the very ſame, no other difference but that *that* was by way of a Diſcourſe, *this new one in* Dialogue: I muſt now give you one of Mr. *Baxter's* Reaſons for *Laymen's* Non-Conformity, and it ſhall be the *Corporation Oath impoſed upon all that would enjoy the Priviledges of the Corporation*, this is a ſpecial Reaſon, and is juſt ſuch as the reſt in his Book, it had been indeed directly to his purpoſe, if every man that was allowed to be a Member of our Church, had been obliged to take the *Corporation Oath*; if all the People that live in the Villages throughout *England*, nay if all that live in any Towns that are Incorporate muſt have taken that *Oath*, or muſt not have come to Church, it had been a *Juſt Plea* for *Non-Conformity* in them who think the *Corporation-Oath* unlawful; but that a man cannot come to Church and Communicate there in the Offices, becauſe he cannot take the *Corporation-Oath* to qualifie him for example ſake for *Sheriff* of *London*, is ſuch Logick as no body will own or knows any thing of but Mr. *Baxter*.

His two Reaſons juſt before this, to wit his 10*th.* and 11*th.* are of the ſame ſtamp, and indeed his whole *dozen* of Laymens Reaſons are all alike, that is Mr. *Baxter's*, who minds little elſe than to make a great ſhew, and manages his buſineſs by the Number not by the Weight of Arguments, or elſe I am ſure it had been too hard a taſk for Mr. *Baxter* to have muſtered up *Twelve Reaſons* why Laymen cannot conform to

our Church, while all his Learning and Skill cannot help him to *one* Substantial Reason for Laymen's *Non-Conformity.*

Having now done with the *Three Reasons* I promised to give you an account of, and shewn you how you may convince your self of the *unnecessarineß* of this *New Book* of Mr. *Baxter* even by the perusal only of his *Pleas for Peace*, I will pass now to my *Second Reflection*, that this Book was altogether as **Unseasonable** as it was unnecessary.

Within these last twenty Years or little more, there hath been nothing so much in some Mens mouths and in their Papers as *Petitions for Peace*, *Pleas for Peace*, the most *Passionate Wishes* for *Concord*, and *Suplications even upon their knees* that they might be heard, for Accommodation, and yet to the unhappiness both of Church and State we have found no good to come of all these good words: One cannot but be even uneasie to know how Discord should continue, where there has been so much of temper, and such an earnest Zeal for *Concord*; either the *Clergy* of the *Church of England* have been deaf to all *Petitions for Peace*, and inflexible and obstinate against healing such a Division in the Nation by some mild concessions, and abatements of what they themselves judged not absolutely necessary; or those People on the other hand that talked so much of Peace, and Union, and Accommodation, meant nothing less than what they said, but while they gave good words with their mouths, had War in their hearts, and were resolved either to destroy the *Constitution of the Church*, or to keep up an eternal feud against Her.

It is too easie to find where the guilt lies, and *which side* hath been really, notwithstanding all their talk, the

the true cauſe of the preſent Diviſions being kept up to the height they are in. Only recollect to the time of the *Popiſh Plot*, when it was hoped that it would have proved a happy juncture for an *Union* among *Proteſtants*, while all People were poſſeſſed with ſuch apprehenſions of very great dangers from Popery; moſt People thought that ſuch a ſeaſon would have invited, and of it ſelf without any other Arguments have perſwaded Proteſtants to a better underſtanding of themſelves and one another, and that the Moderate *Non-Conformiſts* would have taken this favourable opportunity to apply themſelves to the *Biſhops* and *Clergy* of the *Church of England* for *Peace* and *Union*, whom they might then hope to have found in a good temper and diſpoſition for reconciliation, while both ſides were equally apprehenſive of dangers from the Common Enemy.

Did thoſe *Non-Conformiſts* therefore who have ſo loudly, and ſo often proclaimed to the World their earneſt deſire for *Concord*, their purſuit after *Peace* and *Union* lay hold of this favourable Opportunity, and addreſs themſelves to the Church of *England* for a happy Accommodation upon mutual Condeſcenſions: No Sir, you know that they were ſo far from it, that when *ſome* of our *Church* ſpake to them of it, **They held back**, and inſtead of ſuch a behaviour towards the Church as ſuch a time did require, the *Church of England* her ſelf was made *Popiſh*, infamous Libels were daily thrown out againſt her.

The *Dean* of St. *Pauls* has given ſuch an Hiſtory of that time and affair, as will be a laſting Monument to the World, how real ſome men were then, who had talked ſo much of *Peace*. I am confident he writes there what he was certain of by his own experience. *We were ſtill in hopes* (ſays he, ſpeaking of that juncture of the Popiſh Plot) *that Men ſo* **Wiſe**, ſo **Self-denying** *as the Non-Conformiſt Miniſters repreſent themſelves to the World, would in ſo critical a time, have made ſome ſteps or advances towards an Union with us,* In the Preface to his unreaſonableneſs of Separation. *p.* 34, 35, 36, 37, &c.

at least to have let us know their sense of the present State of things, and their readiness to joyn with us, as far as they could, against the assaults of a Common Enemy. Instead of this, those we discourst with, seem'd farther off than before; and when we left expected such a blow, under the name of a Plea for Peace, *out comes a Book, which far better deserved the Title of,* A Plea for Division and Seperation.

I have already given you the Dean's further Character of this *Book*, but this was not all, for as Mr. *Dean* goes on in this History, *But as though this had not been enough, to shew what Enemies to* Peace *Men may be under the pretence of it, not long after the same Author sets forth another Book with this Title,* The True and only way of Concord of all the Christian Churches; and what Mr. *Dean*'s Sense was of these two Books, you may find just after the mention of them. *When I looked into these Books, and saw the Design of them, I was mightily concerned, and infinitely surprized, that a Person of his Reputation for Piety, of his Age and Experience in the World, and such a* Lover of Peace *as he had always professed himself; and one who tells the World so often of his* Dying *and of the Day of Judgment, should think of leaving two such Firebrands behind him, as both these Books will appear to any one who duly considers them.*

And now Sir, who is it that should be guilty of writing two such pernicious and mischievous Books, and at so unseasonable a juncture, but our Friend Mr. *Baxter*, who has *Written* and *begg'd* so much for *Peace*; the very same Man who in our days is now a second time guilty of the same mischievous and unseasonable Practice.

You see Sir, by this account how earnest *they* were for Peace and Union with the Church, at such a critical and dangerous juncture, as that of the *Popish Plot* was, that had talked and written so much formerly for it, but we have

have a greater instance at this very time of the *Sincerity* and *Temper* of some of our *Non-Conformist Brethren*, as to the matter of healing our present Divisions.

In the Church of *England* there hath appeared for some Years just past, a general inclination towards giving ease to such Dissenters as cannot joyn with the Church upon any terms less than her destroying her whole Constitution, and making the Terms of Communion easier to those that can unite with Her; the Bishops themselves whom Mr. *Baxter* is so fierce against, as not to allow that such an Inclination could be in them, were not shy of owning this to the World, when a necessity did require it: It was the great Design of that *Ensnaring Declaration* of the Late *King for Liberty of Conscience* to bring the *Bishops* and *Clergy* of the *Church* of *England* to one of these difficulties, either to acknowledge and act under the *Kings Dispensing Power*, by dispersing and reading that Declaration, or to have made them appear to the Body of the Dissenters as obstinate against all tenderness towards them by their refusing to read it; and this Design was as easily baffled by the Bishops, who tho' they would not be brought upon any terms to own such a pernicious Dispensing Power in the King by consenting to read his Declaration, yet took care in their **Famous Petition** to Him, to let the World know, That *they were not averse to the Publishing of the Declaration for want of due tenderness towards Dissenters, in relation to whom*, they declared, *they were willing to come to such a Temper as should be thought fit, when that matter come to be considered and setled in Parliament and Convocation.*

This Assurance to the Dissenters was not forgotten by the *Reverend Bishops*, when their troubles about that *mischievous Declaration* were over, but was *renewed* by *Them* in those *Proposals of Advice to* that *King* by most of the *same Bishops*, whom he had sent for up out of the Country

to

to adviſe with. I think it is in the 10*th.* or 11*th.* Article [for I have them not here with me] of thoſe *Propoſals* as they are Printed more exactly in the *Biſhop* of *Rocheſter's Second Letter* to the *Lord Chamberlain.*

And when this firſt Parliament after thoſe Promiſes made by the Biſhops was ſet down, and a Motion made by an *Honourable Peer* of the *Church of England*, that a Bill or Bills might be brought in for the *eaſe of Diſſenters*, *ſeveral* of the *Biſhops* did not only ſecond the Motion, but the *Biſhops* of *St. Aſaph* and *Ely*, *Gloceſter*, *Chicheſter*, and *Peterborough*, made Speeches in the Houſe upon it, propoſing the means of an *Accommodation by improving and perfecting the Liturgy, and making ſome Terms of Communion more eaſie, and of eaſe to all Proteſtant Diſſenters that cannot come up to thoſe Terms.*

Theſe are Inſtances beyond all Queſtion of the *Biſhops Integrity* in this buſineſs, when *They promiſed tenderneſs to the Diſſenters*; and this Diſpoſition was ſeen in the Generality of the Inferiour *Clergy* alſo, I cannot but refer you for a full ſatisfaction herein, to the *Publick Sermons* of the *Clergy* ever ſince; I may appeal to the *Lord Mayor* and *Court* of *Aldermen* of *London*, ever ſince their *Chappel* at *Guild-Hall* was open, whether the Clergy did not diſcover in their Sermons before them, the ſame inclinations to tenderneſs towards all, and to Union with ſome of the *Proteſtant Diſſenters*, and particularly Dr. *Sherlock* (*x*) whom Mr. *Baxter*, and ſome of his Brethren have taken ſo much pains to repreſent to the World as an Enemy to Peace, and a mighty favourer of Popery; and whether they did not earneſtly adviſe others to the ſame Temper, and heartily pray that it might alſo be found among the Diſſenters: The ſame Appeal I might make concerning thoſe Sermons at Court before their Majeſties, but moſt of them are in Print, and ſpeak for themſelves.

(*x*) See his Sermon Preached before the Lord Mayor, *Nov.* 1688.

And the ſame Temper did appear in their Converſation

as

as well as in their Sermons, and I need give no farther Inſtance of their willingneſs for tenderneſs and Union, I ought to ſay of their Zeal for it, than the **Letter to a Member of Parliament in favour of the Bill for Uniting Proteſtants**; which was written while the Bill for Union was paſſing the Two Houſes of Parliament, and which I do moſt earneſtly recommend to the peruſal of all Proteſtant Diſſenters, and of them, who will notwithſtanding all this which hath been ſaid and done on the Church's ſide, wonder (as I have heard ſome very lately do for want of true Information about theſe things) that the Church-men are not for Moderation towards Diſſenters.

Thus, Sir, I think I have made it evident enough, what a general Diſpoſition towards tenderneſs has appear'd on our ſide, the Biſhops have inviolably obſerved the Promiſes and Aſſurances which they gave, the reſt of the Clergy have diſcharged themſelves faithfully herein, being not only willing, but many of them Zealous Promoters of an Union with ſome, and eaſe to all Diſſenters, neither Books nor Papers againſt theſe things on our ſide, but every thing contrary. This is the Temper, and this is the Behaviour of the Biſhops and Clergy of *England* in order to Peace and Union, and now I muſt enquire whether the ſame Temper has appear'd among the Diſſenters, and whether their Behaviour has been of this kind: And here I cannot without Sorrow and Indignation tell you, that their Behaviour has been ſince the late happy Revolution ſuch, as cannot be reconciled with any Diſpoſition to Peace or Concord; They have, I am afraid it will be to their everlaſting Infamy, Publiſhed within one quarter of a Year ſince this Revolution more Books, nay above twice as many Books againſt the Church of *England*, than they did during all the laſt Kings Reign againſt Popery, tho' they could not but ſee and own, that Popery was like to bear down all before it, and it ſeems might have done for all them,

them, who amidſt all the furious and numerous attacks of our Proteſtant Religion from the Popiſh Prieſts ſtood looking on, as if they had been unconcerned Spectators at a ſhow, and were as mute as Fiſhes, excepting only two Perſons among them, who when the Controverſie was almoſt at an end, writ two ſmall Tracts upon the ſame Subject of Tranſubſtantiation. They have begun the Controverſie afreſh againſt the Church of *England*, as if they were unwilling to allow any reſt to thoſe who had laboured ſo courageouſly againſt Popery, but I dare undertake to foretel their ſucceſs, that as they had leſs reaſon than the Papiſt to begin a Controverſie againſt the Church of *England*, ſo they will reap as little credit from it, ſince (bleſſed be God) as the Church of *England* wanted not of her Sons to Encounter and Triumph over Popery when it was in its greateſt Power, and had the Countenance of the King for it, ſo ſhe has thoſe that can with as much eaſe baffle all the New-muſtered Reaſons for Non-Conformity. How often have we been told by Mr. *Baxter*, and others of them, that they are not againſt Epiſcopacy and Liturgies, and yet at this time, when we might have expected that they would have had ſome regard to the Peace and Union of our Nation, and to their own words, the very firſt Book they let fly againſt us, is againſt our Epiſcopacy it ſelf, wherein they ſtrike at our Epiſcopacy as unknown to the Church of Chriſt for the firſt Three Hundred years, the Author of this Book is dead ſome time ago, but the Party will not ſuffer the Book (as it ought) to have died with him, but Mr. *Iſaac Chauncy* muſt usher it out into the World (in order to our Union at this time) with a Preface to the ſame tune of preſſing, that a Biſhop in the Apoſtles times, and for the ſpace of the firſt Three Centuries of the Goſpel-Church, was no more than a Paſtor to one ſingle Congregation. This Book is fit to impoſe upon none but thoſe that know not one Syllable of the Hiſtory

ſtory of the firſt Ages of the Church, and hath been as to the Subſtance of it anſwered already by the Dean of St. *Pauls* in his Unreaſonableneſs of Separation, *Part* 3. *Sect.* 8. *p.* 242, *&c.* and by Dr. *Maurice* in the latter part of the Preface to his *Vindication of the Primitive Church and Dioceſan Epiſcopacy*, and in the Book it ſelf, and I have leave to promiſe the World, that a compleat Anſwer to the whole will be finiſhed and publiſht ſhortly.

Their ſecond Book which they publiſhed againſt us, and from the ſame hand, was about Liturgies to ſhew the Novelty of them, and how long it was before any ſuch were known or heard of in the Chriſtian Church; the Deſign of Publiſhing theſe two Books is very eaſily ſeen, which I do not care to inſiſt further upon here, ſince it is ſo plainly contrary to the repeated Profeſſions of ſo many Non-Conformiſts: however I can aſſure you that theſe two Books are not like to do the Miſchief which is intended by them, ſince this about Liturgies, as well as the other about Epiſcopacy, is under the Examination of a very Learned Perſon, and both the Anſwers may be expected by the end of *Michaelmas-Term*, or at the beginning of the next *Term* after *Chriſtmas*.

Theſe two ſmall Tracts about two particular Points were only to make way for two more voluminous Peices, wherein the whole Controverſie betwixt the Non-Conformiſts and the Church was to be reaſſumed at a time, when every one thought it had been laid aſleep, and that healing Principles and Conceſſions, would have been the ſtudy of both ſides equally. The Dean of St. *Pauls* I am confident did believe, that the angry Controverſie againſt his excellent and well-deſign'd Sermon at *Guild-Hall*, in 1680. had been ended near ſeven years ago; and who would have expected, that after ſo long a ceſſation of Arms, and at ſo unſeaſonable a juncture the World ſhould have been troubled with that Controverſie any more? You muſt therefore learn

to wonder at nothing in ſome Men, the Mountain is deliver'd at laſt, and one Mr. *Gilbert Rule* is deliver'd of a *Rational Defence of Non-Conformity*, in anſwer to Dr. *Stillingfleet's Unreaſonableneſs of Separation.*

I have had this Book with me into the Country, but cannot now give you my Judgment of it; by what I have read in it, I can readily find, that the Excellent *Dean* needs not trouble himſelf with taking notice of it, and I hope he never will; however Mr. *Rule* ought not to expect an anſwer yet, nor to complain, tho' it be ſeven years before he receive it, ſince his own was ſo long in bringing forth; and betwixt You and I, it will take up no very ſmall part of that time to get through Mr. *Rule's* Book, not for the largeneſs of it, but for a worſe Reaſon or two, which I will leave you to gueſs at.

It will perchance be replyed to this, that the Non-Conformiſts ought not to bear the blame, if ſuch Men as Mr. *Rule* will be troubling the World ſo unſeaſonably with their Controverſies and Defences: But what will they be able to ſay for the next Author I muſt mention, their great Oracle Mr. *Baxter*, who has written, and ſaid, and begg'd ſo much for Peace, and for Accommodation, that he ſhould be guilty of ſo much Indiſcretion, and unſeaſonable Zeal, as to endeavour to exaſperate Diſſenters againſt the Church, and the Church-men againſt Diſſenters, at a time when he could not but know, that there were ſuch general preparations and diſpoſitions for Peace every where, and that he from whom of all Diſſenters living ſuch a thing was leaſt expected, ſhould not only Publiſh but take ſuch care to have preſented to the Members of Parliament this violent unſeaſonable Book which you have ſent me.

I muſt own to you, that it hath very much leſſen'd the eſteem I have had for Mr. *Baxter* to find him thus ſowing Diſcord and Diviſion, and ſuch an Enemy to Peace, and in ſo ſmall a diſpoſition for it, as this Book ſhews him to be notwith-

notwithſtanding all his former Profeſſions for Peace. I cannot reconcile this Book or the temper of it, either with Charity or Chriſtianity.

I will not trouble you with the fry of little Pamphlets thrown about at the ſame juncture againſt our Church, ſome of which I have ſeen, and believe there are more which I have not. I will only ask now, whether the Temper and Promiſes of our Biſhops, the Sermons and Diſcourſes of our Clergy, or the Writings and Pamphlets of Mr. *Baxter* and *Clarkſon*, of *Rule*, and the like Publiſhed ſince this happy Revolution diſcover better inclinations to Peace and Union; and whether any thing can be ſo likely to breed further miſchief, and to prevent all Accommodation as Mr. *Baxter*'s ſtarting the Controverſie ſo unſeaſonably at this time.

I hope in God, that whatever Mr. *Baxter*'s Intentions were by his Publiſhing ſuch a Book at this juncture, and by taking ſuch care to have them preſented to all Parliament Men and to others, particularly to ſeveral of the Clergy of *London*, and to ſuch of them as had been his Antagoniſts in this very Controverſie, neither the Biſhops will mind Mr. *Baxter* or his Book, nor the Clergy be provoked by it to lay aſide their Diſpoſitions to Peace and Accommodation, but that our Church may have the Glory, and the Satisfaction of doing ſome men good againſt their wills.

I think, Sir, that I have ſhewn you ſufficiently how very unſeaſonable this Book of Mr. *Baxter*'s was for thoſe peaceable deſigns which have been on foot a long time, and publiſhed to the World by the Biſhops Famous Petition for above this laſt twelve Month; I have now but one other Reflection to make upon it, that it is as **Unaccountable** a Book, as it was **Unſeaſonable.**

One would have expected that the great age Mr. *Baxter* is arrived to, and the continual complaints that were made of his indulging and giving up himſelf upon the leaſt occaſion

to heats and paſſion in his controverſial Books, had taught him to reſtrain himſelf for the future, and to refrain all indeciences either towards Perſons or Things: but this Book of Mr. *Baxter*'s is a deplorable inſtance how deaf ſome can be to the beſt advice, and how far Paſſion can become habitual to ſome as even to be Nature in them, and what they cannot conquer or avoid. His Paſſion in this Book hurries him ſometimes ſo far as to make him forget Truth and Modeſty, and to ſacrifice both them to his Indiſcretion.

Tho' I know you do not wonder at ſuch things in Mr. *Baxter*, yet I am ſenſible a great many will, and that all his Favourers and Friends will accuſe me immediately of Injuſtice and Calumny againſt an innocent Man.

How innocent Mr. *Baxter* is as to thoſe Reflections I have made, they themſelves ſhall be the Judges if they pleaſe, the World however will, and if ſuch things be not in this Book as I charge Mr. *Baxter* with, and it be not altogether as unaccountable a Book as I affirm it to be, I will begg Mr. *Baxter*'s, Theirs, and the World's pardon.

To prove the heat he was in, when he Publiſhed this Book, and the ſtrange Paſſion which hurries him through it, I will not trouble any one to look into the Book it ſelf, or ſo much as to open it, let him but read this Title Page it ſelf, and then paſs ſentence upon the Book or Me. *The Engliſh Non-Conformity as under King* Charles *II. and King* James *II. truly Stated and Argued, by* Richard Baxter, *who earneſtly beſeecheth Rulers, and Clergy, not to Divide and Deſtroy the Land, and caſt their own Souls on the dreadful Guilt and Puniſhment of* **National** *PERJURY* **Lying, deliberate Covenanting to Sin againſt God,** *corrupt his Church, and not amend, nor by Laws or* **Blind Malignity,** *to reproach Faithful Miniſters of Chriſt, and Judge them to Scorn and Beggery, and* **To Lie and Die in Jails as Rogues,** *and ſo to ſtrengthen* **Profaneneſs, Popery** *and Schiſm, and all for want of Willingneſs and Patience to read and*

and hear their juſt defence; while they can ſpend much more time in Sin and Vanity. The Author humbly begs that he and **His Books of Unconfutable Defence** *of a miſtaken perſecuted Cauſe may not be Witneſſes againſt them for ſuch great and wilful ſin to their Condemnation.*

This is I muſt needs ſay, the warmeſt Title Page I ever read, and ſo will you, and all thoſe Lords and Gentlemen Mr. *Baxter*'s Book was preſented to, here is nothing but Paſſion and Damnation throughout.

And the ſame heat that is upon the Title Page, is carried throughout the Book, if he has occaſion to ſpeak of the Biſhops and Clergy of the Church of *England*, or to diſpute any point with them in it, Dioceſans, Prelates, Book-makers are the Biſhops Titles with him, but for the reſt of the *Clergy* he knows not how to call them ill enough. One while they are a Multitude of raw ignorant Fellows or Lads, in another place they are ignorant ungodly Lads; What would Forreigners think of our Church of *England*, of thoſe numerous Learned Tracts which were Publiſhed within theſe laſt four years againſt Popery in *England*, ſhould they read theſe Characters of our Biſhops and Clergy in the Book of one, who lives among them, who lives in *London* it ſelf, and muſt certainly know, that the Characters are deſerved which ſo Pious, ſo Conſcientious a Man, who believes a Judgment and a Hell does venture to give of them, the leaſt that ſuch could believe muſt be, that Mr. *Baxter* and his Brethren *Non-Conformiſts* are the only ſupporters of Religion, Piety and Learning in *England*, and that every one of thoſe ſo many Learned Books lately Publiſhed againſt *Popery* were written by them, and that none of them could be the Works of Ignorant ungodly Lads. But if I were to argue with Mr. *Baxter* upon this point, I would fain know what reaſon or what neceſſity there was for ſuch ſtrange and unaccountable language towards the *Clergy* of *England*, would not the Reaſons and Arguments in his Book againſt us have been as ſtrong and as clear, tho' he ſhould have uſed all decent behaviour towards our Biſhops and Clergy in it, and had omitted ſuch ignominious Names and Characters: Such Language is ſo far from being neceſſary to make an Argument good, or a deduction plain, that it makes the World ſuſpect, that the ſtrength and whole force of ſuch a Man's Argument lies in the Nick-name and ignominious Character.

His Indecencies towards his Betters, and his Brethren however, is much more excuſable than his Paſſionate rudeneſs towards things

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Sacred, towards one of our Sacraments: when he is up in his heat and violence, then Baptiſm it ſelf muſt be called (as an Atheiſt or (*a*) P. 26. Scoffer at Religion does) **Water and Words** (*a*) and he goes on raving againſt the Church's Power to admit Infants indiſcriminately to Baptiſm; If (ſays he) (*b*) P. 63. *it be meerly volendo, as if Heaven* (*b*) *were at their will, why do they not ſit at home, and make a deed of Gift of Heaven to the Infants at the Antipodes and of all the World.* And a little lower, *He that can believe to day that God hath made a gift of Salvation to all Infants that any body will Baptize, may eaſily believe to morrow, that he will not caſt away the reſt meerly becauſe no Carrier will bring them in, or becauſe no body will waſh them, and ſay over them the words of Baptiſm.*

At this indecent and unbecoming manner does Mr. *Baxter* treat Baptiſm it ſelf, in expreſſions ſo clowniſh as are fitter for a Porter's mouth than a Divine's: if Mr. *Baxter* thought himſelf witty in theſe paſſages, I know what rank of Men to range him among, they do not become any ſort of Gown, nor Men of any Ingenuity or Breeding.

But theſe Indecencies towards Perſons, and Sacred Things may be much better accounted for than his Inſults upon Truth and Modeſty, and his Violation of them. Mr. *Baxter* is pleaſed (when he is diſcourſing the Matter whether the Church or the Diſſenters did more probably ſerve the Deſigns of Popery) to grow very (*c*) P. 222. warm about it, and to appeal to experience, *I think*, ſays he, (*c*) *ere long you are like to be convinc'd more effectually than by writing, which Party is liker to bring in Popery, and to turn Papiſt* and asks the Queſtion very boldly, *Who hath done and ſuffer'd more to keep Popery out*, that is, *Churchmen* or *Diſſenters*. I will joyn iſſue with Mr. *Baxter* upon this Queſtion, and will appeal to the World, whether it is the *Church of England* Men or the *Diſſenters* that have done or ſuffer'd more to keep out Popery; The late Kings Reign is the time by which we can try this cauſe, then it was that Popery appear'd barefac't, and endeavour'd by Places and Preferments as well as by Pen and Pulpit to prevail over the Nation; We will examine then firſt, who did moſt to keep out Popery; when the Proteſtant Religion was aſſaulted by the Popiſh Prieſts, both from the Preſs and from the Pulpit; Did the *Diſſenters* enter the liſts with them? did they countermine Popery from their Pulpits? They dare not deny that it was the Churchmen, and they alone that manag'd the whole Controverſie againſt the Popiſh Books, they dare not deny that the province of Preaching down Popery during the Popiſh

Popiſh Reign was left entirely to the *Church* of *England* Pulpits, that for their own Part they did not offer to Preach againſt the Kings Religion, but were wholly ſilent therein, that for their Part inſtead of writing Books againſt Popery, they writ in defence of it by conſequence while they flattered by their Addreſs a *Popiſh* King in his diſpenſing with our Laws, and breaking in upon the Eſtabliſhment of the Proteſtant Religion among us. Mr. *Baxter* himſelf knows one that was writing an Addreſs to the *Popiſh* King, while the Churchmen were defending their own, and expoſing his Religion; There were abundance of excellent and very bold Sermons Preached againſt *Popery* even during the laſt four years of the Reign of *Popery*, there were above 200 Diſcourſes publiſht againſt *Popery* during that Reign; I muſt now ask Mr. *Baxter* two very ſhort Queſtions; *Firſt*, Who they were that preached thoſe Sermons, and writ thoſe Books? His Conſcience cannot but make him confeſs that they were the Members of the Church of *England*: And *Secondly*, Who they were then that have **done more to keep out Popery?** Let him but read what he ſaid in his Book, and ask his Conſcience *Pilate*'s Queſtion, *What is Truth?* Let us now ſee whether *Churchmen* or *Diſſenters Suffer'd* more to keep out *Popery*, and here I need only ask Mr. *Baxter* two or three Queſtions; Were thoſe Noblemen and Gentlemen *Diſſenters* that left all their profitable places, and were cloſetted and turn'd out of all Commiſſions, becauſe they would neither promiſe nor conſent to take off the *Penal Laws* and *Teſts*? Were thoſe *Churchmen* that were put into their Places and Commiſſions? Again, Were thoſe that were try'd and Suſpended by the Eccleſiaſtical Commiſſion *Diſſenters*? Was the Biſhop of *London* ſuch, the Vicechancellor of *Cambridge* ſuch, or the Fellows of *Magdalen Colledge* in *Oxon* ſuch? Laſtly, Were thoſe ſeven Biſhops that were ſent to the *Tower*, and try'd for reſiſting the deſtructive diſpenſing Power *Diſſenters*? Were any of thoſe who were Diſplaced, Suſpended, or Impriſon'd *Non-Conformiſts*? Or were any *Non-Conformiſts* either Diſplaced, or Suſpended or Impriſoned? Did not they Addreſs, Conſent and Concur to lay aſide the *Teſt*? Were not *Lob*, and *Alſop*, and *Penn* become the Miniſters of State? I could ask Mr. *Baxter* ſome more as uneaſie Queſtions, I will only deſire to know with what face he could talk at that rate in his Book, and yet know all theſe things; I will only put him in mind of a ſaying of his own which he uſes in this very Diſpute, *The Impudency of ſome Men is the ſhame of depraved humane Nature.*

I have now but a ſmall part of my laſt charge againſt Mr. *Baxter* upon my hands, that he hath not conſulted Modeſty any more than Truth in this his Book, this is a nice matter, and almoſt as indecent to be repeated, as it was in him for to write it.

In one part of his Book he is making the Compariſon betwixt the lives of thoſe who go to Church, and his Friends that ſtay away, and cannot indure to hear that *Churchmen* ſhould be better than *Diſſenters*, and then asks whether the badneſs of thoſe who ſtay away from the Church is in any Vice, after which comes the Modeſt Lecture I muſt mention.

Here are, ſome ſay, *many hundreds that Practice Phyſick in* London: *The Poſts, Walls, and Gates* (d) *are ſtickt with Phyſicians offers to cure the* Lecherous Pox: *To day I read* Kirleu's *Bill*, that ſaith, *he hath Cured Eight Hundred of that Diſeaſe. I dare bet with you all the Money I have, that if you enquire, not eight, or perhaps two of that Eight Hundred were* Puritans, *or ſuch as you now caſt out for* Non-Conformiſts (*unleſs you call* Papiſts *or ſuch other*, Non-Conformiſts) *except any of them were Wives that catcht it of Husbands that are of your Church or Pariſhes, and not of us*; *or Husbands that catcht of ſuch Conformable* (*or* Papiſt) *Wives.*

(d) P. 220.

You ſee, and cannot without laughing read how very critical and nice Mr. *Baxter* is upon the matter, but he ſhould have been as tender of a thing called *Modeſty*; ſuch a Deſcription is fitter for *Aretine* than Mr. *Baxter*, but ſome Men can allow themſelves in any thing, tho' it be never ſo ridiculous and immodeſt together.

Theſe are the Reflections I deſign'd to make upon Mr. *Baxter's* Book, and if you have read thus far, you will be able to juſtifie me in every one of them, that this Book ought not have been publiſhed at all, ſince it was ſo unneceſſary, ſo unſeaſonable, and ſuch a paſſionate unaccountable Book; whether the writing this Letter will do any ſervice to Mr. *Baxter* by ſhewing him how very unhappy he has been herein I cannot divine; nor whether it will make him more cautious for the future. One thing I cannot but beg of Heaven for him, that God would forgive him the publiſhing this Book; and to this Prayer I muſt add this wiſh, that when ever Mr. *Baxter* is call'd out of this World, this and all the reſt of his Controverſial Books may be buried with him, that ſo thoſe Books which have done no good in this Age, may never be able to do miſchief in the Next. I am

Yours

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